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Harding, Warren Gamaliel

ADDRESSES
OF
PRESIDENT HARDING

MAY 23, 1921

HOBOKEN, N. J.

RETURN OF BODIES OF SOLDIERS, SAILORS,
MARINES, AND NURSES

NEW YORK, N. Y.

LUNCHEON, ACADEMY OF POLITICAL SCIENCE,
HOTEL ASTOR

DINNER, CELEBRATION OF 125TH ANNIVERSARY
OF FOUNDING OF THE NEW YORK COMMER-
CIAL, HOTEL COMMODORE



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**Hoboken, N. J., on the Occasion of the Return of 5,212 Bodies of
Soldiers, Sailors, Marines, and Nurses Who Lost Their Lives
in the Great War.**

There grows on me the realization of the unusual character of this occasion. Our Republic has been at war before, it has asked and received the supreme sacrifices of its sons and daughters, and faith in America has been justified. Many sons and daughters made the sublime offering and went to hallowed graves as the Nation's defenders. But we never before sent so many to battle under the flag in foreign land, never before was there the impressive spectacle of thousands of dead returned—to find eternal resting place in the beloved homeland. The incident is without any parallel in history that I know.

These dead know nothing of our ceremony to-day. They sense nothing of the sentiment or the tenderness which brings their wasted bodies to the homeland for burial close to kin and friends and cherished associations. These poor bodies are but the clay tenements once possessed of souls which flamed in patriotic devotion, lighted new hopes on the battle grounds of civilization, and in their sacrifices sped on to accuse autocracy before the court of eternal justice.

We are not met for them, though we love and honor and speak a grateful tribute. It would be futile to speak to those who do not hear or to sorrow for those who can not sense it or to exalt those who can not know. But we can speak for country, we can reach those who sorrowed and sacrificed through their service, who suffered through their going, who glory with the Republic through their heroic achievements, who rejoice in the civilization their heroism preserved. Every funeral, every memorial, every tribute is for the living—an offering in compensation of sorrow. When the light of life goes out there is a new radiance in eternity, and somehow the glow of it relieves the darkness which is left behind.

Never a death but somewhere a new life; never a sacrifice but somewhere an atonement; never a service but somewhere and somehow an achievement. These had served, which is the supreme inspiration in living. They have earned everlasting gratitude, which is the supreme solace in dying.

No one may measure the vast and varied affections and sorrows centering on this priceless cargo of bodies—once living, fighting for, and finally dying for the Republic. One's words fail, his understanding is halted, his emotions are stirred beyond control when contemplating these thousands of beloved dead. I find a hundred thousand sorrows touching my heart, and there is ringing in my ears, like an admonition eternal, an insistent call, "It must not be again! It must not be again!" God grant that it will not be, and let a practical people join in cooperation with God to the end that it shall not be.

I would not wish a Nation for which men are not willing to fight and, if need be, to die, but I do wish for a Nation where it is not necessary to ask that sacrifice. I do not pretend that millennial days have come, but I can believe in the possibility of a Nation being so righteous as never to make a war of conquest and a Nation so powerful in righteousness that none will dare invoke her wrath. I wish for us such an America. These heroes were sacrificed in the supreme conflict of all human history. They *saw* democracy challenged and defended it. They saw civilization threatened and rescued it. They saw America affronted and resented it. They saw our Nation's rights imperiled and stamped those rights with a new sanctity and renewed security.

They gave all which men and women can give. We shall give our most and best if we make certain that they did not die in vain. We shall not forget, no matter whether they lie amid the sweetness and the bloom of the homeland or sleep in the soil they crimsoned. Our mindfulness, our gratitude, our reverence shall be in the preserved Republic and the maintained liberties and the supreme justice for which they died.

Luncheon of the Academy of Political Science, Hotel Astor, New York City, Monday, May 23, 1921, at 1 p. m.

GENTLEMEN: I can not tell you how gratifying it is to greet a gathering of such men as I see here, brought together for the purpose that animates you. I recognize among you many men peculiarly equipped to deal with the great questions of Government organization, reorganization, and retrenchment; and as I look into your faces I feel that your special qualifications constitute the assurance that you will understand and sympathize with one who in an immediate relation finds himself grappling with these problems. You have studied and dealt with the affairs of great organizations; you know the power of intrenched tradition and long-established custom; you do not need to be told that general, inclusive plans are necessary as a preliminary to accomplishment in such matters.

Everywhere we turn we note that Government has in recent time assumed a more complex relationship to the public than it ever sustained before. The mobilization of man power, industrial forces, and financial resources, which was made necessary in the war's exigencies, could only have been accomplished through the exertion of the utmost powers of Government. Those powers were exerted to the extreme limit, and stupendously important results were attained. As a result of that demonstration of Government's capacity to force great results in emergencies, there has grown up a school of thought which assumes that even in time of peace the same autocratic authority might well be exercised in the general interest. Many men thoughtlessly urge that "Governments took over the control, even the conduct, of many industries and facilities during the war: there followed a great increase in wages, a vast expansion of business activity; therefore why not assume that continuance of such control and management in time of peace would enable continuance of the same liberality in compensation and profits, the same intense business activity?"

Those who look below the surface know that the things which Governments accomplished during the war were accomplished at a staggering cost—a cost which society could not bear for long, a cost that has left society burdened with debts which mortgage generations of the future. They know that the feverish seeming of prosperity was

not genuine, but was possible only because society was literally burning up its stocks of capital, and that this destruction of capital was responsible for the reaction and depression which are now felt universally. In this process the bureaus of Government were immensely increased, and it is for us now to find means of lightening those burdens.

Government, to a greater extent now than ever before, is under obligation to give the greatest service for the lowest possible cost. But it is for certain obvious reasons difficult to do this, because Government is not under the necessity to earn profits nor to obey laws which regulate competition. These are the prime guaranties of efficiency and fair dealing in private business. They do not apply to Government, and therefore Government should be placed, so far as possible, under a strict sway of the methods which are applied in private business to secure these ends. Government should be broad, conscientious, and intelligent enough to subject itself to these rules despite that its quality of sovereignty would place it beyond them if it chose to assume that position. Every principle and device which promotes efficiency in private business should be adapted and applied in Government affairs. I will trust the public official who decides his public problem as though it were his very own.

To bring economy and efficiency into Government is a task second to none in difficulty. Few people, in or out of the Government, have any conception of the growth of Government business in the last decades before the World War; still fewer at all realize the pace to which that growth has been speeded up since the war started. The multiplication of departments, bureaus, divisions, functions has resulted in a sort of geometrical increase in the tasks which confront the heads of executive departments when they face reconstruction problems. They find that with their time already mortgaged in favor of tasks which demand more hours than the day provides they must devise means for doing yet more work with less money.

Fortunately the prospect is not so hopeless as might appear, because the present organization is so bad that the insistent application of a few established principles of sound business organization will result in immediate economics and provide a margin of available means to meet new demands. The party in power is pledged to economy and efficiency, and you may be assured that every energy is being directed to redeem that pledge to the last degree and with all promptness.

At the beginning of his administration President Taft secured from Congress the establishment of an Economy and Efficiency Commission. It made a comprehensive survey of activities, organization, and personnel of the whole Government establishment. The report on that survey was never printed; but it is available, and can be consulted to determine where wastages and overlappings

of function are. That commission further presented particular suggestions as to how specific economies could be effected, efficiency established, and much money saved.

The problem has been vastly complicated and increased as result of the war. The present Congress has already provided for a Joint Committee on the Reorganization of the Administrative Branch of the Government. A representative of the Executive will serve with this committee, so that there is now in progress a thorough study of the whole problem. The task will require some time, and ultimate results must await it. More, it will demand a resolute courage to effect the abolition of the useless and the coordination of the useful.

But meanwhile we shall, I trust, have a budget system in operation under the law before the opening of the new fiscal year. This is a long step toward introducing into Government the sound methods that great private business establishments have adopted. I need not emphasize to you gentlemen the anomalous situation of the Government heretofore in having a great number of spending committees apportioning moneys to various purposes without any study of the relationship between these various purposes, and regardless of the relationship of these aggregated spendings to the revenue in sight. No business, no humblest household, could be thus conducted without leading into disaster.

Establishment of a budget system is the foundation on which reorganization must be based. It is hardly conceivable, indeed, that a proper budget system could be established and carried on for any considerable time without forcing attention to the evils and effecting the reform of many deficiencies in the present system. But the budget program will not do everything. It must not be accounted a fiscal and efficiency panacea, for it will not be. There must still be much and continuing effort to keep expenses down, to insure full value for every dollar of the taxpayer's money the Government spends.

At this point, let me say, too much stress can not be laid on the fact that eternal vigilance is the price of economy and efficiency. Nothing is easier in a Government establishment than to continue in existence offices, positions, employments, once they are created. It requires persistent, determined, stony-hearted devotion to the public interest. There must be utter sacrifice of all sympathy for the place holder whose real reason for keeping his position is that he wants the salary. There must be constant examinations to determine how, in the processes of evolving functions and methods, forces may be reduced and duplications of work eliminated. Inertia, which is easily the greatest force in governmental organizations, must be combated at every point. The fact that a thing has existed for a decade or a

century—that things have been done in a certain way for a generation—must not be accepted as proving that it ought to continue that way. The men who conscientiously and intelligently do this work must not expect to popularize themselves with the officeholders or with the liberal spenders. Even the administration which devotes itself relentlessly to such work must understand that it will lose a good deal of immediate loyalty on the part of a certain class of politicians, which will not be compensated to it at once in the appreciation of the public, for the public will not have the deep, immediate interest or the active concern which will animate the person who finds himself being pried loose from the purse strings.

Nevertheless, thankless and ungracious as the task will be for most of those who devote their efforts to it, it must, and will be attacked, it is being attacked, with all determination. Something can be done, even pending the effective inauguration of the budget and the survey by the joint committee, toward bettering conditions. In all the departments, I may say to you, this sort of work is already progressing under Executive orders within the power of the Executive. We shall need the full support of enlightened public opinion, and, realizing this, I am glad that such bodies as the Academy of Political Science, the United States Chamber of Commerce, the engineering societies, and business organizations generally are studying and discussing these questions. Out of such counsels will come truer appreciation of the difficulties and magnitude of Government business, a larger sense of public responsibility, and a highly desirable cooperation between public and private business for the common good.

Dinner in Celebration of the One Hundred and Twenty-fifth Anniversary of the Founding of the New York Commercial at the Hotel Commodore, New York, Monday evening, May 23, 1921.

MR. TOASTMASTER AND GENTLEMEN: It is a pleasure to join in the commemoration of an anniversary of business, for business is the most engrossing affair of the world. It is no confession of unworthy vanity to say it is especially engrossing in America, because it is the very lifeblood of material existence.

So I have come, Mr. Whitman, to greet you, your staff, your associates, and the splendid company of your friends here assembled. You and your predecessors, sir, have done a continuing work of generations for the cause of American business which it is a pleasure to acknowledge, and on which you are entitled to be highly complimented. The high place which we have given to business in the modern community could not be more eloquently attested than in this gathering. It has brought together men who are proud to be the workers, organizers, producers, directors of business life, and whom the community has recognized as its leaders in the most diversified realms. Perhaps a morsel of special satisfaction may be permitted to me, because, as a newspaper man myself, I find here the evidence of the stability, the permanence, the firm hold in public regard of the particular business that has engaged my own efforts. You are affording us proof of what may be achieved under the guidance of high ideals and a continuing policy of sincere, useful service.

We may well pause a moment to consider what such a background means to a commercial business such as your own. The New York Commercial comes down to us through a century and a quarter of splendid traditions. It is good to think that almost the only thing that has remained constant, unchanging, in the business world since this paper was founded is the supremacy of sound principle and high purpose, which have been its inspiration in the past, which guide it to-day, and which constitute a heritage of distinguished merit.

If we could have summoned for this occasion the men who prepared and issued the first numbers of the old New York Price Current, lineal progenitor of the Commercial, their amazement at material changes, their satisfaction in the vindication of right policies, would offer eloquent testimony. They would see the magic city of

a remade world where they knew a straggling colonial port. They would count near twice as many people in that city as they knew in the entire country. They would learn that here is the business and financial lodestone of a new world. The revolution in methods of production, the introduction of the factory system, the marvels of steam and electricity, the railroad and the steamship, the summoning of science as the handmaiden to progress and the minister to human welfare—these things they would see, and they would exclaim at last: "Has nothing been left unchanged in this magic century of an Aladdin's world?"

And we would reply to them to-night: "Yes; one thing remains unchanged. The generations do not outgrow it. Invention does not supersede it. Mankind can no more prosper without it than it could in the earlier day of simple manners and methods. That one continuing, unchanging, and unchangeable thing is character. Here you may view one of its monuments. Here you will see how through all mutations the structure built with conscience as its architect and character as its corner stone is destined to stand, foursquare and firm. Here you see the business growth from those seeds of character and integrity which you planted. It has lived and grown in three centuries, but it has the same soul that you implanted in the days of humble beginnings."

On an occasion such as this, and in the presence of such an inspiration, it will not be inappropriate to consider for a moment the position, duties, and responsibilities of men who are leaders of business.

The New York Commercial was founded in the time when the young Republic was distracted by a division of opinion concerning our relations with Europe. The noble Washington was being lampooned and traduced because his administration was committed to the Jay treaty with Great Britain, first of the Nation's commercial covenants. It represented an effort to escape embroilment with the Old World system, and in the period when we were too weak to sustain a foreign conflict it served to postpone that disaster. But only to postpone it, for with every wish to preserve the peace it was impossible. We fought wars with France and England as incidents to the French revolutionary and Napoleonic upheaval. It has been too often assumed that our recent involvement in the troubles of Europe marked a new development in our affairs. In fact, it was an old story. We never were and never will be able to maintain isolation. But our part and our place in international affairs are strikingly changed. It is a far call from those days to these; from weakness to power, from poverty to affluence, from the minor to the major participation. For the strides we have taken in every phase of national importance we are indebted in great part to the vision, the energy, the unbounded confidence and unfailing optimism of

the American business community, and to the farseeing leadership of men like those who have directed the great commercial newspaper whose guests we are to-night.

Every generation has its problems. Our rise in power and influence has imposed new responsibilities. Those who for more than a dozen decades have determined the course of this pioneer of the business press have given us a lesson well worth attention. They have seen the country go through many times of stress and crisis, and their institution has gone through with it; wiser for the experience, stronger for the tests. They have seen the time when our weakness as a Nation made it impossible for us to avoid involvement in the troubles of the Old World, and again they have seen how our strength imposed an obligation that made such avoidance equally impossible.

To-day, in the particular realm of this newspaper, we face a like condition. Our strength in the industrial, financial, and commercial world, our capacity to produce, our ability to extend credits which others can not give and which brave but unfortunate peoples sorely need—all these make it necessary that we shall adopt new commercial methods whereby to insure the fullest possible service to civilization. I bespeak the help of every organ of intelligent, understanding business to enable the Nation to meet these demands.

It has been said many times, but it can not be too often repeated and emphasized, that in doing this we will be alike discharging a duty to others and seizing an opportunity for our own advancement. There have seldom been more convincing proofs than we see all around us now of the essential interdependence of all parts of the world. No people, no race, no continent, can live within itself alone. He who displays the broadest spirit of brotherhood, helpfulness, and true charity will most surely be casting his bread upon the waters. The instruments of sound, safe business must be adapted, it is true, to the conditions which face us—conditions unlike any that our times have known, though not greatly different in their economic fundamentals from those of some other epochs. But changing epochs do not alter everlasting principles.

Courage, confidence, and wisdom, along with a fitting measure of enterprise and even adventure, are needed. After the Napoleonic era there were some who viewed the future gloomily; but those who looked to it with hopeful vision, with assurance in the basic things of civilization, at last enjoyed both the satisfaction of duty performed and the substantial rewards of industry expanded, commerce extended, and enterprise firmly established. The day of like opportunity for our generation is dawning after the night of storm and trial.

Our duty to the world at large is pressing, but we will equip ourselves best to perform helpfully if we are unwaveringly loyal to

ourselves. The most important thing to Americans is America, and the most important thing to America is our constitutional system. Our Constitution was adopted in order to perfect a more perfect Union, and as the national life has developed under it that Union has been so perfected that State lines have well-nigh ceased to have more than geographical and political significance. We have had the test of disunion, the triumph of reunion, and now the end of sectionalism. On the social side, we have naturally fallen into groupings with community of interest—agricultural and industrial—and incidentally social. These groupings have drawn us as a community still closer together. The Great War effaced the last vestige of sectionalism, and we stand to-day more firmly unified than ever before.

Inseparable from the formation of a more perfect Union, the Constitution sought to establish justice. True, we have not attained the perfection of our ideals in this regard, nor has any other human society done so; but it is the proof of our national righteousness of purpose that we are never satisfied, and therefore are always trying to maintain as possible the equilibrium of precise justice.

Justice, like charity, must begin at home. We must be just to ourselves and to our own first of all. This is not selfish, for selfishness seeks more than a fair share; we seek only that which is rightfully our own, and then to preserve that to ourselves and our posterity. The war sadly disjoined things in the world and we are now seeking to restore the proper balance. In our efforts to do this, to achieve justice without selfishness, we will do well to cling to our firm foundations. I believe in the inspired beginning. There we will find that national greatness was founded on agriculture, that later we developed industry, and ultimately commerce, both domestic and foreign.

We will do well to keep in mind at this time the fundamental importance of agriculture and in every possible way insure justice to it. Surely we have done all that could be expected of us in carrying the burdens of others, and there is no regret, but our just concern now is for our America, because our own restoration is our first service to a world turning to us for aid and inspiration. The country has emerged from the hectic prosperity following the war and is suffering from depression. We are confronted by the need to place our own house in order, and no more important feature of that effort can be visioned than to place our agricultural industry on a sound basis and provide machinery and facilities for financing and distributing crops. If we do this we merely will be providing the farmer with facilities similar to those enjoyed by the business community generally. The farmer is entitled to all the help the Government can give him without injustice to others, because it is of the utmost importance that the agricultural community be contented and prosperous. This must

be accomplished not at the expense of any other section of the community, but by processes which will insure real justice among all elements in the community. Agriculture has been laboring under several handicaps and is entitled to have facilities placed at its disposal which will remove these.

Turning to industry, our policy must be to give it every facility possible, but to keep Government outside of participation in business on its own account. It is not necessary for the Government to intrude itself in the business activities which are better conducted through private instrumentalities merely in order to demonstrate that the Government is more powerful than anything else in this country. The time has passed when any man or group of men are likely to indulge the idea of being more powerful than the Government. There is no need for the Government to engage in business in order to enforce justice and fair dealing in business. Nor is there need for the Government to engage in business to deplete the Treasury. The Government's part in business should be no more than to insure adherence to the principles of common honesty and to establish regulations that will enable it to sail a safe course. There has been some tendency to regard business as dishonest until it should prove itself honest and to regard bigness in business as a crime. But almost all business to-day is conducted on a scale which, though we have come to regard it as commonplace, would have made our forefathers gasp; and I prefer to assume it is honest until proven dishonest. If they had attempted to limit business in size and scope, they would have prevented even the little business of to-day being as great as it is. So I speak for the least possible measure of Government interference with business but for the largest cooperation with properly conducted business, and the most effective measures to insure that, whether it be big or little, business shall be honest and fair.

In our effort at establishing industrial justice we must see that the wage earner is placed in an economically sound position. His lowest wage must be enough for comfort, enough to make his house a home, enough to insure that the struggle for existence shall not crowd out the things truly worth existing for. There must be provision for education, for recreation, and a margin for savings. There must be such freedom of action as will insure full play to the individual's abilities. On the other side, the wage earner must do justice to society. He must render services fully equal in value to the compensation he is paid. And, finally, both employer and employee owe to the public such efficiency as will insure that cost of service or production shall not be higher than the public can fairly pay.

Assuming that these things may be laid down as fundamentals, it is for us all to get back to work. That is what made our country great; it is what will put the whole world back on the right track.

We must have, the world must have, confidence that things will come out right. We have dealt with the greatest problem that humanity ever confronted in carrying on the war. We will have no problem hereafter greater or more difficult than that was. Therefore we are entitled to every confidence that we will cope successfully with the problems which yet lie ahead of us.

Our position in the world has been greatly changed as a result of the war. We have become a creditor rather than a debtor. It is doubtless unfortunate that the change was brought about under the conditions which war imposed. We would have become a great creditor nation in the near future had there been no war. The exigencies of war compelled the Government to take, by taxation, much wealth from our people to be loaned to our Allies. This is the basis of their obligation to us, and it is not a good form in which to hold the obligations of one people to another people. It is altogether to be hoped that in a reasonable period we may change the form of these obligations and distribute them among all the people. We hope that this may be accomplished and also that there may be effective reduction of the cost of Government. In these ways we hope to release a great volume of wealth and credit from the burden that Government has been imposing and make it available for the development of domestic industry and the expansion of foreign trade. We ask the cooperation of business leaders, and we assure them that within its proper limitations the Government will meet them halfway.

By this process we shall aim to create renewed demand for the product of our industries, to establish permanent markets abroad for surpluses. We are learning that the immediate need, so far as our own country is concerned, is not so much production as facilities of exchange. To that end I could wish that the tendency of the world's gold to gravitate to us might be checked. Beyond the point of insuring security to our circulation, gold would be more useful to us in the vaults of great banks abroad, where it would be the guarantee of the gold standard and of those fair exchanges which are vital in international trade. I feel strongly that the protection of the gold standard is one of the great obligations which peculiarly appeals to us.

We are coming to understand the elements of the problem we face, and that is a long step toward solution. Give us the earnest support of such men as I see gathered here, of such organs of sound policy as we are gathered to acclaim, and we shall not be long in putting our country on the right course, ready for the signal. "Full speed ahead."

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